

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Remarks Following a Meeting on Health Care Reform and an Exchange With Reporters

June 24, 2009

The President. All right. We all set? Well, I just wanted to thank the Governors that are represented here today, Governor Rounds, Gregoire, Douglas, Granholm, and Doyle. They are representative of the bipartisan group of Governors that hosted roundtables around the country on health care after some initial meetings that I had with the National Governors Association, in which every single Governor—Republican or Democrat; small State, big State—emphasized how important it was to reform our health care system to control costs, to assure choice of doctors and plans for individuals, and to make sure that we are providing high-quality care.

And all of them represent States that have done some terrific work, wonderful experiments, have seen successes. But all of these Governors also expressed to me, and I think heard from their constituencies, deep concerns about what the future holds. I think there's a recognition that when you have premiums doubling three times faster than wages, when you have businesses seeing 25- or 30-percent increases in terms of their health care costs for their employees, when you look at Medicaid budgets and what that's forcing Governors to do in terms of making choices about trying to still fund higher education and the other things that are going to make States competitive, there's a recognition that we have to change the status quo.

And so they've reported back to me. There's no perfect unanimity across the table in terms of every single aspect of reform. I think everybody here wants to make sure that Governors have flexibility, that they have input into how legislation is being shaped on the Hill. But they have done my administration and, I think, the American people a terrific service in bringing some of these individual stories to us. And we're committed to working with them in the weeks and months to come to make sure that when we get health reform done, it is in partnership with the States where the rubber so often hits the road.

And one of the advantages they have, as Joe Biden put it, they've planted a mole inside our administration. [*Laughter*] Kathleen Sebelius, very recently a Governor, knows exactly what all of them are struggling with, and she and Nancy-Ann are going to be interacting with them on a regular basis as we move this agenda forward.

So I want to thank them publicly. And I look forward to working with them to get this done for the American people and for the people of their respective States in the weeks to come.

Thank you. All right guys.

Health Care Reform

Q. Is there any give in your deadline, Mr. President?

The President. We need to get it done.

Q. This year?

The President. We need to get it done this year.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:56 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Mike Rounds of South Dakota; Gov. Chris Gregoire of Washington; Gov. Jim Douglas of Vermont; Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm of Michigan; Gov. Jim Doyle of Wisconsin; Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius; and Nancy-Ann DeParle, Director, White House Office of Health Reform.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Health care reform, meeting; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; DeParle, Nancy-Ann; Douglas, Jim; Doyle, Jim; Granholm, Jennifer M.; Gregoire, Chris; Rounds, Mike; Sebelius, Kathleen.

Subjects: Governors Association, National; Health and Human Services, Department of : Secretary; Health and medical care : Cost control reforms; Health and medical care : Medicare and Medicaid; Michigan : Governor; South Dakota : Governor; Vermont : Governor; Washington : Governor; Wisconsin : Governor.

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